

LITTLE MANISTEE RIVER WATERSHED ASSEMBLY MINUTES - August 2, 2017

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Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting opened at 3:05 by Armas Soorus.

Present: Armas Soorus, Ed Hoogterp, Scott Gest, Greg Goudy, Kayla Knoll, David Spruance, Jim Squier, Tim Phillips, Rob Carson, Chris Sullivan, Shaughn Barnett, Barb Stenger, Jeremy Geist, Chris Sullivan, Joyce Durdell, Laura Heintzelman, Susan Hornkohl, Lou Fitz, Chris Riley

Introductions made and sign-in sheet passed.

Minutes of the 6/13/2017 meeting approved - Motion by Jim Squiers, second by Tim Phillips. Approved.

There were no requested agenda revisions.

Armas reviewed the status of the contract between the LMWCC, Alliance for Economic Success, Manistee, and Networks North. The agreement is moving ahead and signatures are still needed to finalize the process are being obtained.

Armas reviewed the Deliverables as outlined in the Agenda for Phase 1 of the Plan Creation Process. He introduced Plan Consultants Ed Hoogterp and Scott Gest who led the group in a discussion of Prototype Plans and Goals for the Project as outlined in the following section.

a. Discussion of Plans and Goals for the Project.

Ed introduced a Prototype of Plans and Goals designed to assist us in creating LMRWS project plans and goals. Goals may change as the plan is developed and knowledge gained. He passed a sheet with five sets of goals and objectives. Ed stated that "one of our primary goals is to preserve and enhance the cold-water resource of the river. It seems that is one of the unique things about the LMR. Other goals shown are a compendium of goals and objectives used in other plans, i.e. Charlevoix, Pere Marquette, Bear Creek, and the Betsie River, and show the things people want to accomplish with their watershed plans.

Part of a plan is to meet State and Federal rules such as including an educational component to inform people throughout the watershed how to do the right thing to preserve water quality. It also involves an expectation to work cooperatively with agencies such as this one and with governmental organizations working multi-county wide to help implement the watershed plan, i.e. Land Conservancies, Conservation Districts, and others. The LMRWS crosses many governmental boundaries. 4 counties, 2 state planning districts, several land conservancies responsibility areas, A permanent watershed council can serve as the communication hub to bring these things together. (As outlined) those are the kind of goals that have specifics in this, we really want input to say what you want from this plan, what are the goals you want to achieve. Based on experience, most of the listed goals are pretty appropriate for your area."

Scott added that there will be revisions as we go through the information about the watershed. Ed stated "it is an important place to start because it gives us an idea of what we want to look at in the beginning and know what are we trying to accomplish." Scott and Ed also work with the watershed groups to find grant dollars to implement projects from sources such as the state. Once a plan is approved those funds can become available to accomplish plan goals.

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b. Input from the Council, Committee.

Some questions ensued,

1) What does BMP stand for? Best Management Practice (planning acronym)

2) What about economic impact? In goal 3, Ed suggested that we cannot separate economy from environment and this question will come up often as it relates to development. Barb S. stated that she is involved with Lake Co. Economic Development Alliance and "our strategic plan includes preserving our environment while growing our economy so I think right now probably the best thing is to make sure we have these partnerships and that we have this understanding that what we have we need to preserve but we still need to work together to grow the economy."

3) Also, a question on supporting the development of non-motorized trails and protected natural areas, and about non-motorized versus motorized. Ed pointed out the term low-impact ORV trails is included but may be controversial. Lake Co. that currently is very involved with providing ORV access to trails. Ed explains that as part of the plan, the steering committee works together to try a balance. "People are going to use the area, they will use the area. But we don't want to turn our creeks into mud holes."

Armas noted that this looks like a great start and will be living document as we go. Ed explained that is why he used the term Prototype because he did not want anyone to think this was the final thing. This is the starting point.

Overview of Base Maps - Skeletons (for data) on which we hang the watershed (per Ed.):

Scott Gest introduced and displayed the base maps that would be used as part of the educational process and key to locating numerous characteristics found within the watershed, including governmental units. Watershed boundaries were defined showing Little Manistee River Watershed as a sub-watershed of the Manistee River Watershed. A Hydrologic Unit Code of 8, 10 or 12 digits is assigned by the US Geological Survey. While the Little Manistee River Watershed does not drain the same region as the Manistee Watershed, the two rivers come together before flowing into Lake Michigan. The point where they come together defines the watershed HUC, in this case it is HUC 8. The Little Manistee Watershed and its sub-watersheds all converge together at Stronach Twp. and are assigned a HUC 10 until it empties into Manistee Lake. The assignment is not by size but by where all water converges at a certain point, like a tree.

Scott explained that the maps produced so far are close to final. A few more are still in the works and are being tweaked as information is added. The HUC 12 area of the Little Manistee was pointed out. Ed explained that we able to add items such as how much development there is and what kind of habitat can be found in key areas. Breaking it into sub-watersheds helps to define the area being looked at for details of interest. Scott continued with explanations of two reference maps, one with state and national forest and one without, showing delineations of wetlands, rivers, tributaries, lakes and roads with their designated national function classifications as US, State or local systems. The goal is to keep them from becoming too busy. Certain impactful structures are identified, such as the Manistee Co. landfill, the weir, two dams, towns, villages, townships, etc. A different map will show recreational activity and access points.

It will be important to get key features and sites of impact into maps fairly early on. There will be a road-crossings map from data provided by the Conservation Resource Alliance. Scott and Ed will be working closely with our partners who can provide data that will be incorporated in the maps. Some questions were fielded about population density and items

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such as perched culverts or road run-off at crossings. It was noted that we have large areas of state and national forests in our watershed; a more accurate calculation is to be determined but is estimated at slightly over 50%.

Joyce commended Scott on the maps and progress so far, and also made note that the Lake Co. Community Foundation Grant is earmarked for educational materials, including the production of the maps that will become key to the process. Armas asked for additional comments, great job so far was the consensus. Scott noted that he can produce data sets and geo-locate items for the maps and add them for further detail as we go along.

Ed passed a handout on designated and desired uses to help us determine what the desired uses are, and there are certain things that have to be accomplished (as defined by state and federal guidelines.) So these are steps that need to be taken to define goals and objectives. Ed explained how to view the handout that addresses some state and federal guidelines on the water uses, such as, navigation, full-body and partial body contact, warm and cold water fishery, cold and warm water definitions, fish consumption and other aquatic lifeforms, industrial and public water supplies, etc. These must meet certain standards. Any area that has been tested and doesn't meet those standards will show up on governmental Integrated Report (Act 301, 305) that shows standards are not met. Right now we have no major areas of concern with the exception of fish consumption warnings that apply to all waters in Michigan. Many of the standards will show 'Not Assessed', a few are 'Not Supported'. Our main focus will be sites at risk. This information will be derived by a lot of talking with persons knowledgeable about the watershed and with groups of individuals who have perceptions of areas of risk. Some specific risks are known to be in common with many other watersheds in the state. Other risks may derive from activity more specific to our watershed, such as navigation and access sites/lack of access sites, farm access, etc. We may use 'Locally Desired' uses as part of our plan, such as "water clarity."

1) Some questions arose about warm/cold water fisheries. Sometimes find warm water fish in the river. Why?

2) Do you have small trout pond downriver as a site for concern? Not far above the weir. Warming the river.

A chart was handed out that showed an example of how our Implementation will work and be charted, overviewed provided as follows by Scott and Ed.

Scott - "This chart outlines future programs with features for the watershed and focusing on taking the goals and looking at programs designed to address the goals. There will be priorities assigned to it, costs assigned to it. The time we did this, looking at the 10 year period, we divided it up into three periods. Potential partners and potential funding sources will be in there. Objectives addressed will be related to the specific task. Where in the 10 year process it is earmarked to take place to fulfill the goals and specific tasks will be there.

Part of this process is defining the tasks so the chart will be completed during the tail end of the process. For instance, these are just some generics to think about, restore and protect high priority stream bank erosion sites. The maps will identify those so you can start identify them. Work with the road commissions and riparian owners for best management practices, these are some of the things, shoreline and streambank issues. There will be one for storm water, which is not a lot of involvement for the watershed, but can talk even with a residential dweller about storm water management issues as part of the educational program process that will be included in this.

Then we will also look at planning and zoning and land uses could be identifying usage, ordinances for invasive species, so whatever things you want to define in the plan. Joyce and Scott will be working on this together with Joyce looking at

county, township and town and village ordinances. A couple of areas may pop up that could be improved in the watershed so we address that with an implementation project. A lot of times it just education.

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Road/ stream issues, we are looking at, we are studying the road-stream crossings on an update basis, and includes dust control agents on roads near stream crossings. "Ed added, " in every plan I'm aware of the most expensive item I am aware of are road-stream crossings."

"Land protection management, this where the land conservancies pop up if there are priority parcels that potentially could be acquired or conservation easements. This is the section that handles that. The Grand Traverse Land Conservancy in Manistee Co. has a great inventory of priority parcels they have already done so we will try to implement that in and will try to work with the Wexford Co. Land Conservancy to see what we can find in the rest of the watershed.

Things like the Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program can be promoted to farmers. Habitat for Fish and Wildlife, conduct fishing surveys, what's your potential for the small lakes and streams. Then on to recreational safety, is there a need for public access sites, do they need improvement to reduce erosion.

Groundwater and hydrology, we will actually do maps that define groundwater recharge and a few things that will help them form an idea where your recharge area is and have an educational program on how to reduce the amount of impermeable surfaces in recharge areas.

Water quality monitoring will be covered. Any areas that need additional attention or focus will be identified and budgeted for. Wetlands are in question as to what has been done. Maps show a lower than anticipated amount of wetlands by comments gained here. We need to look into that.

Identify hotspots for invasives, a lot of times this is educational. Many times people don't know they are spreading invasives. Waste water and septic systems is largely an educational piece. And other categories you believe should be in here, we will add and populate the chart. Continue partnering with lake associations.

Looking at Master Plans in Counties Towns, Villages and Townships, are there environmental goals, references, growth, impervious services, preservation of open space, storm water management, groundwater protection, buffer zones and more, etc. And any ordinances address these items."

Ed passed out a one page public survey document asking us to complete it before leaving. Drawn from other watershed grant programs, so will have other surveys to compare the responses with. This survey will be part of our appeal to do public education and look for items for thought and input as we continue the process. It should also be available for electronic submission. Greg asked about EPA surveys like this one. Ed was not sure. Lou Fitz suggests send the survey with property taxes. Youth input needed, schools can help. Kayla said social media will help to draw a broader audience.

Armas asked for further comments. Dave asked who are stakeholders. Armas and Ed reply 'anyone with an interest, fishermen, business, property owners, gov. units., partners, organization, etc. Dave asks about those who do not want to participate. Ed expects this will happen. We need to talk about clean water and educate how it is done. Armas mentioned we have had some negative input in Stronach and Luther. Ed suggested that it has a positive economic impact where plans are established.

Armas asked us about how often we would meet. Ed suggests it is a good idea to set up a regular meeting for the steering committee and invite a broader group as desired. Armas would like to broadcast our meetings to other partners to keep them informed. Scott is going to set up a shared google folder for documents and also we are putting updates on our website.

Armas adjourned the meeting at 4:41 pm.

Minutes submitted by: Joyce Durdal